

**KNBC-TV (NBC) Channel 4 BROADCAST TRANSCRIPT**

*"Southern California's New Quality of Life Report Card"*

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Program Today in LA

ROBERT KOVACIK, co-anchor:

Southern California's new quality of life report card is out this morning. While areas like crime got positive remarks, the grades for traffic, housing and education are far below average. TODAY IN LA's Natasha Ghoneim is live in Downtown LA now with the very details.

Hi, Natasha.

NATASHA GHONEIM reporting:

Good morning, Robert.

This State of the Region report card offers a pretty good snapshot of our quality of life here in Southern California and exactly how it compares to the rest of the nation. It's published by the Southern California Association of Governments and it's a mediocre report card. We don't receive any 'As,' and in almost half of the categories surveyed, we receive a 'D' or a failing grade.

There is some promising news, however. In the area of employment we received a 'B.' There were almost 120,000 more jobs in 2005, a little bit better than the national average, and the largest increase in the region in five years. Every county experienced job growth, but the Inland Empire fueled the growth, accounting for 48 percent of the job increases. At 5 percent, the region had the lowest unemployment rate in 17 years and it was lower than the national average for the first time in 15 years.

Income received a 'C.' The average household income was \$52,000. It declined a bit from 2004. Fourteen percent of the region's population, however, lives in poverty, which is higher than the national average, which is just more than 12 percent.

In the area of housing, we get a 'D.' We had record high housing prices, big rent increases and that made affording a home difficult. This is a record low. In 2005, about half of the households nationwide could afford an average priced home, but in Southern California, only 15 percent of could afford one. Among the nine biggest metropolitan areas, Southern California has the highest percentage of

people who rent.

Now, no surprise here, traffic in Southern California fails. It's still the most congested region in the nation. But there were some favorable improvements. Record gas prices drove more people to carpool, but the number was still lower than in 2000. Mass transit use increased for the first time in two years.

Education passed, but barely, with a 'D.' Reading and math scores were below the national average, except in Orange and Ventura counties. And among the nine largest metropolitan areas, Southern California ranks last when it comes to people with a high school diploma or a college degree. Seventy percent have a high school diploma; 27 percent have a college degree.

But there is a good piece of news, here it is getting safer to live in Southern California. In 2005, there was an 11 percent decrease in violent crime compared to 5 percent decrease statewide.

In Los Angeles, I'm Natasha Ghoneim, TODAY IN LA.

CHRIS SCHAUBLE, co-anchor:

Thank you.

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(Unrelated Segments)

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SCHAUBLE: All right, topping our news at 6:30, a new report gives Southern California poor grades when it comes to education, traffic and housing. But there is one bright spot, safety. TODAY IN LA's Natasha Ghoneim has the details.

Good morning, Natasha.

GHONEIM: Good morning, Chris. Yes, it's getting safer to live in Southern California, and I'll tell you more about that in just a second.

This is the State of the Region report card. It's published by the Southern California Association of Governments. It is not exactly a report card you would want to take home to mom: No 'As.' And in almost half of the categories surveyed, we received 'Ds' or a failing grade.

There is some promising news in the area of employment, however. We received a 'B.' There were almost 120,000 more jobs in 2005, a little bit better than the national average

and the largest increase in the region in five years. Every county experienced job growth, but the Inland Empire fueled that growth, accounting for 48 percent of the job increases.

At 5 percent, the region had the lowest unemployment rate in 17 years, and it was lower than the national average for the first time in 15 years. Income received a 'C.' The average household income was \$52,000. It declined a bit from 2004. But 14 percent of the region's population lives in poverty. That's higher than the national average, which is just more than 12 percent.

In the area of housing, we get a 'D.' We had record high housing prices, big rent increases, and that made affording a home more difficult. This is a record low. In 2005, about half of the households nationwide could afford an average priced home. But here in Southern California, only 15 percent could. Among the nine largest metropolitan areas, Southern California had the highest percentage of people to rent.

No surprise here, traffic in Southern California fails. It's still the most congested region in the nation. But there were favorable improvements. Record gas prices drove more people to carpool, but the number was still lower than 2000. Mass transit use increased for the first time in two years.

Education passed, but barely with a 'D.' Reading and math scores were below the national average, except in Orange and Ventura counties. Among the nine largest metropolitan areas, Southern California ranks last when it comes to people with a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree. Seventy-seven percent of us have a high school diploma; 27 percent at least a college degree.

But it is getting safer to live here. In 2005, there was an 11 percent drop in violent crime in Southern California. That is--compared to a 5 percent drop statewide.

In Los Angeles, I'm Natasha Ghoneim, TODAY IN LA.

KOVACIK: All right, Natasha, thank you very much.

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